

An Analysis of Feminism Reflected in the Film the French Lieutenant's Woman

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Abstract

The novel The French Lieutenant's Woman is a masterpiece that John Fowles, a contemporary British writer created in the 60s of last century. In 1981, the film of the same name directed by Karel Reisz and adapted by playwright Harold Pinter. The French Lieutenant's Woman is one of the world's most successful literary classic films. It is about a love story happened in England in nineteenth Century. Sarah, a woeful and mysterious woman in Victorian era, a virgin but claimed to have committed to a French lieutenant, be spurned for being regarded as a sinful and lustful woman. But her mystery, unique, boldness, melancholy beauty and wild enthusiasm could arouse compassion and adoration of men. She had a torrid love with Charles but eventually left quietly when Charles had dissolved engagement with Freeman. In the Victorian era -- a patriarchal social environment, the social status of women was affected by the patriarchy. The female was put in a humiliating position for a long time. In patriarchal oppression, the economy also forced to sponge on men which result in women's being unable to enjoy the right of self-realization and self-independent. However, in this film, the heroine Sarah in the social context demonstrated bravery and determination of striving against traditional customs, pursuing after true love and defending against her freedom. Her pursuit of individual liberty and economic independence led to her pursuit of economic independence, working as an entourage to teach children painting. Sarah was in ruling position in her relationship with Charles. She intentionally broke her leg to seduce Charles had sex with her; she destructed her reputation and hurt herself; She was always in black in order to attract attention of Charles; for lack of confidence she left Charles eventually. In these senses, Sarah was not a completely feminist heroine. Therefore the director was not entirely successful with regard to create a woman image of freedom and independence. It is not proper to appreciate this film from the traditional feminist perspective.

Keywords: Sarah, freedom, independence, feminist

1. Introduction of the Film

The novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a masterpiece of British contemporary writer John Fowles who wrote in the 60's of last century. In 1981, the film of the same name directed by Karel Reisz and adapted by playwright Harold Pinter. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is the world's literary classic film.

1.1 A General Introduction of the Film

1.1.1 Summary of the Film

The French Lieutenant's Woman is a provoking love story. It narrates a woman who suffered a mental burden from a cold world but stubborn personality to struggle against social and traditional customs strove for the freedom of the story. The story took place in 1867 in the United Kingdom, the rich kids Charles Smithson went to a town to meet with Miss Ernestine Freeman who was engaged to him. At the seaside, Charles encountered with Sarah Woodruff who was called the french lieutenant's woman. Because Sarah had a kind of very special qualities feminine charms, Charles was utterly infatuated with her. He pursued Sarah passionately and eventually he lifted with Freeman's marriage. Although Sarah loved him, she seemed to keep an arm's length away and unexpectedly left without say goodbye in the end. When Charles found her after untold hardships, Sarah had been a new woman emphasized on freedom and gender equality.

1.1.2 Filming Techniques

The film is set in a real world and intercuts with a 19th century story. The real world story is between the actors Mike and Anna, they playing the lead roles in a modern filming; the 19th century story is a Victorian era drama involving Charles Smithson and Sarah Woodruff-- a French lieutenant's woman. Director utilizes an alternating shooting techniques confronts audience with another kind of visual experience. At the beginning of the film, the scene appeared that Anna took the mirror and looked at her face, but the mirror appeared Sarah in the 19th century Victorian era. Director shows a love story of Victorian with a modern perspective, subtly connects reality and fiction to fulfills artistic reality.

1.2 A Brief Description of the Director

1.2.1 About the Director

"Harold Pinter, CH, CBE (10 October 1930 – 24 December 2008) was a Nobel Prize-winning English playwright, screenwriter, director and actor. One of the most influential modern British dramatists, his writing career spanned more than 50 years."¹ His masterpieces such as *The Birthday Party* (1957), *The Homecoming* (1964), and *Betrayal* (1978), all of these were adapted into the movie. "His screenplay adaptations of others' works include *The Servant* (1963), *The Go-Between* (1970), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981), *The Trial* (1993), and *Sleuth* (2007)."² Radio, stage and television in which he also directed or acted and many other works. Pinter born and raised in Hackney and educated at Hackney Downs School. He was a cricket player as well as a sprinter, he always acted in school plays and writing poetry. He trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama, he also worked in theatre in Ireland and England. Critics described his early works as "comedy of menace", and his later works like *No Man's Land* (1975) and *Betrayal* (1978) were referred to as "memory plays". "In 2005, Harold Pinter was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, the highest honour available to any writer in the world. In announcing the award, Horace Engdahl, Chairman of the Swedish Academy, said that Pinter was an artist "who in his plays uncovers the precipice under everyday prattle and forces entry into oppression's closed rooms"."³

1.2.2 Analysis of the Different Points between the Film and the Fiction

There are many differences between the film and the fiction. The biggest difference is that the novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* set three different endings. The first is Charles ultimately chose to return to his fiancée side and lived unhappy life; the second is Charles broke of his engagement with Freeman and found Sarah to be with her; the third is Sarah refused Charles and both of them lived a solitary life. However, film emphasizes on the two different love stories between the Victorian times and modern times. In Victorian era, the ending is Sarah was reconciled with Charles and they lived a happy life in the end. In modern times, Mike and Anna had emotion due to play, but finally Anna chose to leave instead of destroying the lives of Mike and his wife. Different endings will trigger viewers to think differently. This is perhaps the common expectations of director and author in the creative process.

2. Feminist Representatives and Their Literary Theories

"Feminism" first appeared in France, referred to claim relating to women and men fight for equal social rights, later spread to Britain and increasingly popular. Western feminism is divided into three phases: the first feminism (early 19th century to the 20th century); modern feminism (the early 20th century to the 1960s); the post-modern feminism (1960s-present). The western feminism originated from the end of eighteenth century after the bourgeois revolution in France and the enlightenment. The second half of nineteenth century appeared the first generation of feminism, synchronization with the industrial revolution in Europe. This stage was mainly from the economic demands of women's liberation. The modern feminism appeared in early 20th century to the 1960s, because of the influence of the two world war, the construction of Western world colonial system disintegrated rapidly, feminism in this period of great upheaval also divided into several factions. Radical feminism represented by Kate Millett's *Sexual politics*, Marxist / socialist feminism represented by Julie Michelle and liberal feminism represented by Betty Fridan.

¹ Harold Pinter, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Pinter

² Harold Pinter, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Pinter

³ Harold Pinter. Org. from <http://www.haroldpinter.org/home/index.shtml>

Radical feminism in order to get rid of domination and oppression of men, proposed that according to women's life and bodies experience as the foundation to establish women's subculture. This period is characterized by exclusion of men and the man regarded as the enemy. The Marxist / socialist feminism mainly from the economic and class struggle required equality of women and men. Liberal feminism is the oldest feminist genre, during this period advocated equal education and political rights and economic opportunities.

Post-modern feminism began in the last century 60-80's, during this period people rejected the traditional stereotype of the male ways of thinking and only when women gained the equal status and respect with men in society, people could accomplish all kinds of changes required and have justice, enjoyment, order and creation.

2.1 Virginia Woolf's a Room of One's Own

The famous British writer, literary critic Virginia Woolf, published *A Room of One's Own* in 1929. At beginning she made a proposition: "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction."⁴ In this work Woolf believed that women had their own houses and independent economic status is the material basis of obtaining creative freedom and personal freedom. However, the tradition had forced women be financially dependent on men and caused them to be deprived of all equal rights. Woolf's father, with the same ideas of that time, thought that the family only boys could go to school. The reason is that he didn't think that her daughter got the chance of education was meaningful, so Woolf had not normal school education experience. Woolf lets the audience realized the importance of education, and also give women the warning their position in society.

"In one section, Woolf invented a fictional character, Judith, "Shakespeare's sister,"⁵ to illustrate that because the doors were closed to women, a woman with Shakespeare's gifts would have been refused the same opportunities to develop them. Just like Woolf, who stayed at home but her brothers went off to school, Judith stayed at home but her brother William went off to school. Judith was restricted to the home: "She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school." Woolf's prose held all the hopes of Judith Shakespeare against her brother's hopes in the first sentence, then suddenly curtailed Judith's chances of delivering the goods with "but." While William learned, Judith was chastised by her parents should happen to pick up a book, as she was inevitably abandoning some household chore to which she could be attending. Judith was intended but she did not want to marry, she was fordone and ashamed for her marriage. However, Shakespeare established himself, Judith was trapped by the limits of the expectations of women and then killed herself, her genius without expression, but Shakespeare lived and established his legacy.

Woolf wanted to solve the problem of gender equality so she proposed a bold idea - androgyny. That is the same body had the physical characteristics of both sexes. Woolf wrote in the book: "Everyone among us has two forces dictate everything, a male power, a female power. In a man's mind, male power surpasses female power; in a woman's mind, female power surpasses male power. The most normal and suitable situation is that these two forces live together in harmony, when the spirit of cooperation." This hypothesis broke through the gender opposite ideological framework and embodied Woolf's ideal--harmony and unity of both sexes.

2.2 Simone de Beauvoir's the Second Sex

"*The Second Sex* is a 1949 book by the French existentialist Simone de Beauvoir. One of her best-known books, it deals with the treatment of women throughout history and is often regarded as a major work of feminist philosophy and the starting point of second-wave feminism."⁶ Beauvoir released a personal manifesto: "I never let my life succumb to the will of others." She put forward a view that women are not born, but created by the day after tomorrow. She believed that women's living environment, especially its economic position in which the woman pushed a shitty situation. For that matter, existentialism implied the entire human's responsibility: Beauvoir not only accused discrimination, contempt and sometimes cruel actions of men to women, but pointed out that women caused their weak position also had a inescapable responsibility. She thought they passive, yielding and lack of ambition.

Beauvoir published it in two volumes. "The first, "Biological Data", described the relationship between ovum and sperm in all kinds of creatures."⁷

⁴ Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1989.

⁵ *A Room of One's Own*, 1.1.1 Judith Shakespeare, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Room_of_One%27s_Own

⁶ du Plessix Gray, Francine (May 27, 2010). "Dispatches From the Other". *The New York Times*. Retrieved October 24, 2011

⁷ Appignanesi, Lisa (2005). *Simone de Beauvoir*. London: Haus. p. 46.

Then de Beauvoir continued to compare the physiology of both men and women, and said that women were weaker than men. "In chapter 2 "The Psychoanalytical Point of View", de Beauvoir first to interpret the theories of Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler."⁸ She denied them both, for instance, de Beauvoir found that the study of eroticism in the context of perception had the advantage of the capabilities of the psychoanalytic framework.

"In chapter 3 "The Point of View of Historical Materialism", de Beauvoir related *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* by Friedrich Engels"⁹ but eventually found that there were insufficient basis or reasons for its asserts to assign "the great historical defeat of the female sex" to the invention of bronze and the occurrence of separate estate. She cited Engels, "for now we know nothing about it" and declined him for his answers of "dodges".

"The attack on the psychoanalytic denigration of women in *The Second Sex* helped to inspire subsequent feminist arguments against psychoanalysis, including those of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*."¹⁰ "Paglia, who has identified *The Second Sex* as one of the influences on her 1990 work of literary criticism *Sexual Personae*, writes that most modern feminists do not realize the extent to which their work has simply repeated or qualified its arguments."¹¹ In 1989, Millett reviewed that she did not find out that when she wrote *Sexual Politics* she appreciated de Beauvoir to some extent.

2.3 Kate Millett's Sexual Politics

Sexual Politics is a 1969 book by Kate Millett. "Millett argued that "sex has a frequently neglected political aspect" and went on to discuss the role that patriarchy plays in sexual relations, looked especially at the works of D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Norman Mailer."¹² In a patriarchal and sexist way, Millett argued about these authors views and discussion. By comparison, she gave the homosexual writer Jean Genet credit for his gender politics. She for the first time introduced the "patriarchy" concept and she believed the root of women's oppression is "patriarchy". Through various social study of she proved that the difference between men and women of whether in psychological or social role or social status, the results were caused by acquired culture. Millett is the first one female representation to combine sex and politics.

"*Sexual Politics* was an important theoretical touchstone for the second wave feminism of the 1970s. It was also in the extreme controversial."¹³ Millett criticised Norman Mailer's novel *An American Dream* and then Mailer wrote a reply named "The Prisoner of Sex" in Harper's Magazine, assailing Millett's comments and defending Miller and Lawrence, then vastly attacked Millett's works used the same name in his non-fiction book. Richard Webster wrote that Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* vitalized Millett's "analysis of the reactionary character of psychoanalysis". Cultural critic Camille Paglia regarded *Sexual Politics* as an "atrocious book". She censured it for attacking on gender discrimination exists in the eyes of Western canon male authors.

2.4 The Definition and Content of the New Feminism

"New feminism is a philosophy which emphasizes a belief in an integral complementarity of men and women, rather than the superiority of men over women or women over men."¹⁴ New feminism is a form of difference feminism which sustains the idea that men and women have different advantages, viewpoints and roles, but advocating maintain stand for the equal value and dignity of both sexes. Among its basic concepts, the most important differences are biological instead of cultural. The new feminism thought in both cultural and economic aspects, women as an important role of bearing children should be valued rather than a generalized family role of women. The major objective is to boost the idea on personal values of equality between men and women; and which in social, economic and legal senses they should be equal, as well as accepting the natural differences between the sexes.

⁸ Appignanesi, Lisa (2005). *Simone de Beauvoir*. London: Haus. p. 59.

⁹ Appignanesi, Lisa (2005). *Simone de Beauvoir*. London: Haus. p. 63-64.

¹⁰ Webster, Richard (2005). *Why Freud Was Wrong: Sin, Science and Psychoanalysis*. Oxford: The Orwell Press. p. 22.

¹¹ Paglia, Camille (1993). *Sex, Art, and American Culture: Essays*. New York: Penguin Books. pp. 112, 243.

¹² *Sexual Politics*, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexual_Politics

¹³ *Sexual Politics*, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexual_Politics

¹⁴ Allen, Sr. Prudence Allen. 'Man-Woman Complementarity: the Catholic Inspiration.' *Logos* 9, issue 3 (Summer 2006) <http://www.endowonline.com/File/spComplementary.pdf>

"Discrimination is an evil, but distinction is God's design."¹⁵ New Feminists consider that men and women are different and such differences affect the way they live, they care about and their advantages and disadvantages. "New Feminists deem that marriage to be a reciprocal self-giving of persons in free, total, faithful and fruitful communion."¹⁶

They argue that a true feminism is not just about women but about the Family - both individually and collectively in the Church and Humanity. As well as New Feminists think that other feminisms are absorbed in "power", domination and positions of visible "authority" as well as masculine and faulty. In their opinion, the dismayed of bitterness, hatred, or retribution of many feminists against men or other women for current or past injustices, "they argue that men and women should work together with one another in interpersonal communion."¹⁷ Nevertheless, New Feminism may also be a form of gender or biological determinism and some people think that is a new presentation type of old prejudices.

3. Sarah's Feminist Features

The French Lieutenant's Woman is about a love story happened in nineteenth Century in Britain. A sad and mysterious Victorian woman, is a virgin but claimed to have committed to a french lieutenant, be regarded as sinful and lewd woman was cast aside. While her mysterious, unique, bold, deep, melancholy beauty and wild enthusiasm arouse sympathy and affection of the men. Sarah fell in love with Charles but after Charles lifted the engagement with others she rejected his proposal and left quietly. Although Sarah strove for freedom and independence, but eventually because of the limitation of the times and the subjectivity of the author and other reasons not fully realized.

3.1 The Phenomenon of Women are Inferior to Men of the Victorian Era

3.1.1 Introduce Women's Situation at Victorian Times

"The Victorian era of British history was the period of Queen Victoria's reign from 20 June 1837 until her death, on 22 January 1901. It was a long period of peace, prosperity, refined sensibilities and national self-confidence for Britain."¹⁸

In the Victorian era, the concept of "pater familias"¹⁹ is the meaning of the husband as the dominant leader of the household and his family, and become deeply ingrained in British culture. A wife's marriage vows stated that she would forever love, respect and obey her husband. A wife's situation in the family hierarchy was secondary behind her husband, the wife being regraded as unimportant and the crucial cornerstones of social stability in Victorian times considered that a wife's duties were to rely on her husband and raise her children. Men treated women as lacking of society's expectations and should be deserving the harsh criticism. "Domestic life for a working-class family was far less comfortable."²⁰ A working-class wife's duty was to keep the home clean, warm, and unconditional around man. In the Vitoria times, for without servant family, women's household chores meant a great deal of washing and cleaning.

The law regarded men as persons, and it was a slow process that the legal recognition of women's rights also could not be entirely accomplished until into the 20th century. Women lost the rights which they brought property into the marriage, even after divorce; a husband had the legal right to control his wife's income; women were not allowed to open bank accounts; married women were not able to make a contract without her husband's approval. All of these property restrictions made it difficult or impossible for a woman to remove an unhappy marriage, or to grab the control rights of property from her husband.

¹⁵ Zeno, *Every Woman's Journey*, 119.

¹⁶ Shivanandan, Mary. "Forming a Community of Persons: the rights, dignity, and role of men and women: a response." from *The Church at the Service of the Family*, ed. Anthony J. Mastroeni: Proceedings from the Sixteenth Convention of the fellowship of catholic Scholars, Orange, CA 1993." Steubenville, OH: Franciscan University, 1994: 91-105.
<http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/mshivana/communit.html>

¹⁷ Alvare, Helen. "A New Feminism" *Liguorian Magazine*. May, 1997.

¹⁸ John Wolffe (1997). *Religion in Victorian Britain: Culture and empire. Volume V*. Manchester University Press. pp. 129–30.

¹⁹ Patmore, Coventry Kelsey Dighton. "The Angel in the House". Project Gutenberg. Retrieved 6 November 2011.

²⁰ Women in the Victorian era, Working-class domestic life, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_victorianism

Never offered the opportunity to women to study subjects of an extended, classical, and commercial nature which undoubtedly made it difficult for a woman to break free from the constraints of society to accomplish independent economical status. "Education was specialised by gender."²¹ Women were only given chance to study refined subjects such as history, geography and general literature, and these made them begin a discussion of interesting but noncontroversial topics. Although the restrictions and discriminations, some women could be superior to "male" subjects such as law, physics, engineering, science and art.

These women pioneered the path for the much improved gender equality in modern education in the UK. Women were also rarely afforded the opportunity to attend university. And that said studying was violated their nature and made them ill.

3.1.2 Introduce Religions and Science at Victorian Times

"During the nineteenth century, the entities we refer to as 'science' and 'religion' both underwent dramatic changes."²² We hope to find a simple constantly relationship between the two. The relationship already across time and regions, from one person to another. In addition, between science and religion in nineteenth Century historic interest argument is a great significance to study history. Cognitive way of science and religion in twentieth Century had been deeply influenced by religion and science historians in the late nineteenth Century, this effect we have only recently begun to transcend.

In the early nineteenth Century of Britain, religion and science were generally considered to be in beautiful accordance. In the Bible and other works, in nature, learning the word of God was considered to be the two aspects of the same truth. "One version of this belief had been manifested in William Paley's *Natural Theology* (1802), which repeated the argument that natural objects show evidences of design, thus showing the existence of a designing God Paley's work was enormously influential for its emphasis on nature as God's creation, even though, by the 1830s, few Christians saw a need to prove God's existence, preferring to take this as an act of faith."²³ *The Bridgewater Treatises* (1833-36) showed that natural theology could be reconfigured into a variety of ways to adapt to the new found. And their sales data also showed that it was a considerable market for non-technical work of science .

"This harmony between science and faith, mediated by some form of theology of nature, continued to be the mainstream position for most men of science, and most interested individuals, right up to the 1860s, at least."²⁴ But it was under threat. In the 1820s and 1830s, some working-class activists saw the opportunities of using specific version of the science for political purposes. Some form of science, especially those coming out of France, seemed to indicate that the role of God was restricted in the universe (or even non-existent), thus undermining the Anglican politico-religious establishment.

3.1.3 Introduce Economy's Situation at Victorian Times

Victorian England's economic developed promptly and had experienced four stages. The first stage was the stage of industrial expansion. Large tracts of familiar lands into houses and former beautiful scenery appeared thick smoke. The large number of people living in the area later became slums. The second stage was the mature stage of industrial. With a mass of people lost their land pouring into the city, industry to obtain substantial quantities of cheap labor. The Victorian era became notorious for employing young children in factories and mines and as chimney sweeps. The wealthy could purchase large quantities industrial manufactured goods and the workers worked for a long time to earn money which can only filled their bellies. The third stage was extremely glorious era.

²¹ Women in the Victorian era, Education, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_victorianism#Education

²² Victorian Science & Religion, Aileen Fyfe, Dept. of History, National University of Ireland, Galway and John van Wyhe, Fellow, NUS; Researcher, History & philosophy of science, Cambridge University., from <http://www.victorianweb.org/science/science&religion.html>

²³ Fyfe, Aileen. 'The reception of William Paley's *Natural Theology* in the University of Cambridge', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 1997, 30, 321-35.

²⁴ Victorian Science & Religion, Aileen Fyfe, Dept. of History, National University of Ireland, Galway and John van Wyhe, Fellow, NUS; Researcher, History & philosophy of science, Cambridge University., from <http://www.victorianweb.org/science/science&religion.html>

Below the banner of civilization, Britain extended to the world. However the poor living conditions had not improved. Women were still in a vulnerable position. The fourth stage was the times of people's introspection and questioning. From the beginning of exposing the the real war, told the public that death was the real theme. Then was Darwin's theory of human evolution, people began to doubt their own belief. During this period, women get rid of corset and many other things. Domestic enveloped in a mysterious atmosphere.

3.2 Sarah's Character Image in the Film

3.2.1 Analysis from the Perspective of Economic Independence

Although Sarah was born poor, she was educated and loved painting. However, her social status neither allowed her to manifest her artistic talent, nor allowed her to have the freedom to love and thinking. Women like her either married a farmer having several children, or lived on big city as a prostitute. Sarah resisted her seemingly doomed fate and moved to the town of Lyme.

In pursuit of economic independence, Sarah was reluctant to depend on others. Meanwhile, her previous employer was dead and the house would be leased, Sarah could not continue to live there. Therefore, Parson introduced her to Mrs. Bo Tanni as an entourage. Sarah hoped to acquire wealth through her own efforts. At the end of the film, Sarah left alone and found a governesses work in an architect's home.

If Sarah did not do entourage and tutor, it was entirely possible for her to look for a farmer to get married and live like the vast majority of Victorian women--totally dependent on men on the economic front, ultimately lost the ability of thinking for themselves and the right of achieving self-worth.

3.2.2 Analysis from the Status of Men and Women Relationship

In the emotional aspects of Sarah and Charles, Sarah has been in a dominant position. Throughout the film, Sarah was ambiguous on Charles. When two people encountered for the first time in the Lyme Regis Undercliff,, Charles had been chased and proactively talked to Sarah. Charles affectionately stared at Sarah and at that time he had been captivated by the mystery of Sarah. Sarah, however, had long been suffered from mockery and slander against, well aware of Charles's identity, so intentionally kept a distance from Charles.

Sarah arranged to meet Charles secretly and told him her real experience to ask for help. She knew that Charles would be punctual for appointments. The two of them fell in love and unable to extricate themselves. Then Sarah went to London. Charles knew Sarah's place and hurried to find her. When he saw Sarah injured leg which could not suppress his feelings any more and eventually they had sex in hotel. This act blasphemed history, culture, tradition, dignity in Victorian times and challenged the social order and religious customs on which based patriarchy. This was undoubtedly inexcusable fault at the time. Nevertheless, Sarah intentionally broke her leg for seducing Charles and after sex she told him that she fell for him at first sight, which led Charles breaking off his engagement. In the end, she left alone without saying goodbye because she needed time to find herself. Throughout the story, Sarah had been trying to seduce Charles and manipulating their relationship.

3.2.3 Analysis from Sarah's Self-Destruct Reputation Behavior

Sarah told Charles that she was in love with a French lieutenant, but eventually it revealed that the lieutenant was not worth it and she left him resolutely. Charles' mood was very complex when he heard Sarah previous experience; it was difficult to suppress the impulse and anger when he heard Sarah gave herself to the French lieutenant. After having sex with Sarah, Charles found that she was still a virgin and knew that everything she said was lies. Why did she use bad reputation to spoil herself?

The main reason for it is that Sarah took it as a unique way of her pursuit of freedom. Sarah lived in lies and became an object of despising and deriding from people around. She experienced a series of solitude, melancholy, resentment, jealousy, deceit and temptation. In Sarah's eyes, freedom was resistance and rejection, saying no to the plight of her own. She believed that the pursuit of freedom requires action. Destroying her own reputation is one of those actions.

3.2.4 Analysis from Sarah's Black Dress

Sarah and Charles first met at breakwater. Sarah's in a black dress which gave a profound impression upon Charles. At that special moment Charles' heart had been quietly planted the seeds of love. He was captivated by the enigmatic side of Sarah.

Sarah's black style also embodied the confrontation of Victorian era women's dress. In the Victorian times, women's clothing style not only used the elements like lace and folds mostly, but also had some prominent coset features. However, Sarah's black broke the tradition and attracted Charles whose traditional concept was ingrained.

3.2.5 Analysis from Sarah's Behavior of Leaving Charles

Sarah first time left with the help of Charles and came to London. In London, they fell in love. When Charles determined to release the marriage with Freeman, Sarah was second time slipped away.

Sarah's heart was filled with contradictions and anxiety. She knew Charles had engagement with others, but still had sex with him. She seduces Charles instead of suppressing her emotions. Sarah knew at the time of the society, this behavior was extremely wicked. Then she chose to leave. She refused Charles' love since she was eager to pursue freedom and in order to realize the real sense of independence and find her own self.

Charles had been looking for Sarah for three years before he finally found her. When he came to the architect's house and interrogated why she left in silence, Sarah's explanation implied her lack of confidence. She was afraid to compromise herself to the traditional concept again and unable to achieve freedom and independence.

4. Conclusion

The film *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, tell us a thought-provoking love story under the background of the Victorian era. According to the core idea and content of the original works, director uses unique shooting skills to show a new women who aspires after self-independence, gender equality and pursues freedom in Victorian era. However, virtually the director does not succeed in creating a free and independent woman image. Therefore it is improper or even biased to look at this film from the traditional feminism perspective.

The heroine Sarah was a courageous and determined woman whom rebelled against traditional customs, in bold pursuit of true love and in strong defense of freedom. However, Sarah did not achieve real freedom and independence. In contrast with the Victorian times' women's style of dressing, Sarah was always in black. Although her black appearance was against with traditional customs, it was more of way to attract the attention of Charles. Charles generated interest in this woman who seemed to conflict with society. In a word, Charles was gravitated toward the mystery of Sarah.

Sarah had seduced Charles on her own initiative. In Lyme town, she entreated Charles to give her time listen to her story. She chose Charles because he was a gentleman from the middle/upper social ladder, In the film Sarah once said, "Why I was born is I am, why I was not born is Freeman", it also obviously see that Sarah's heart still yearned for the upper social life.

Sarah had been in a leading position in her relationship with Charles. In London, Sarah had been aware of Charles engagement, but still pretended to broke her leg to seduce Charles to have sex with her. It was something that was not allowed to happen in the traditional feminist society. In Sarah's mind, Charles was the source of the light of hope in her heart. This move deeply touched the heart of Charles. Not only did he admire Sarah for the persistent pursuit of love, but geared at his ludicrous marriage with Freeman.

After Charles separated with his fiancée, Sarah quietly left. She felt she was unable to match Charles because of her humble status. The spirit of self-sacrifice for love prompted her to left alone instead of waiting for Charles to return back. The reason why she chose the latter between love and freedom is not because her love for Charles was reduced, but because she thought that economic independence was the foundation for the realization of freedom. Only economic independence can make her courageous and brave enough.

From self-destroying reputation to having sex with Charles who had already been engaged, from wearing in black to leaving Charles in silence, Sarah was hurting herself to get so called independence or freedom. Nevertheless, all of these ascribed to her love for Charles. In pursuit of freedom and independence, Sarah never realized that she was encumbered by love.

Sara's behavior was contrary to the traditional feminist views, so it is improper or even biased to look at this film from the traditional feminism perspective. Sarah was not successfully shaped as an entirely independent and free female image. Sarah was not completely free and independent as she herself expected.

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